

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1905.

RECENT ENGLISH HISTORY.

Social England. Edited by H. D. Traill and J. S. Mann. Vol v., pp. lii+864; vol. vi., pp. lvi+948. (London : Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1904.) Price 14s. net each volume.

An Introductory History of England. By C. R. L. Fletcher. Pp. xvii+397. (London : John Murray.) Price 7s. 6d.

Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions. By H. M. Chadwick. Pp. xiii+420. (Cambridge University Press, 1905.) Price 8s. net.

In the fifth and sixth volumes of "Social England," lately re-issued in an illustrated edition (1904), considerable prominence is given to subjects of scientific as well as of historical interest. Thus Mr. T. Whittaker (rather more adequately than in earlier stages) writes on philosophy and natural science in the eighteenth century and the Napoleonic age, and for the same period Mr. D'Arcy Power discusses medicine and public health, Mr. Raymond Beazley exploration and the advance of geographical knowledge, and Mr. G. T. Warner manufacturing progress, machinery, and the transformation of industry (v., 31-47, 56-73, 145-55, 292-307, 321-33, 408-35, 543-6, 560-84, 625-45, 756-60, 805-22).

In the final or nineteenth century volume, geology, chemistry, astronomy, physics, biology, anthropology, engineering, mining and metallurgy, applications of electricity, and the railway system of the United Kingdom are also treated, in addition to our old friends philosophy, medicine, and exploration. The list of scientific writers is much enlarged, and comprises Prof. T. G. Bonney, Mr. Robert Steele, Mr. H. C. Jenkins, Lord Farrer, Miss A. M. Clerke, Mr. W. G. Rhodes, Mr. O. G. Jones, and Dr. J. Scott Keltie (vi., 76-95, 239-90, 413-48, 675-793, 892-927).

Among these contributions we may especially notice, for the sake of illustration, that of Dr. Keltie on British exploration, 1815-85. Here we have a good, clear, business-like summary (very well illustrated, especially by contemporary maps) of a great and significant chapter in the life-history of the English people. But the amount of matter to be treated is so vast, and Dr. Keltie is so conscientious in his determination not to omit a reference, however brief, to every important personage and event within the limits of his subject, that the narrative becomes at times a chronicle of the nature of "materials for history." Thus, in tracing the course of British explorations in Central Asia and the Far East alone, the work of Moorcroft, Wood, Shaw, Forsyth, Hayward, Trotter, Carey, Bell, James, Younghusband, Basil Hall, Collinson, Fortune, Blakiston, Ney Elias, Sladen, Margary, Gill, Baber, Colquhoun, McCarthy, Williamson, Gilmore, Alcock, and Mrs. Bishop is summarised in two pages. It is no doubt difficult to avoid such treatment, and the secretary of our Geographical Society is an excellent

chronicler; but it is perhaps open to question whether a more selective and less annalistic method might not have been followed in this as in certain other articles, such as the "Engineering" of Mr. O. G. Jones, where a more philosophic style is adopted with marked success.

The British history of the nineteenth, or even of the eighteenth, century in one volume, even though that volume run to 930 pages, is an undertaking of no small difficulty; as the assistant editor—and true chief pilot—of the venture, Mr. J. S. Mann, himself admits. Intellectual and industrial achievements are now so multifarious that they can hardly be dealt with in the same book as the political and social history. Science has become more than ever cosmopolitan; processes in the great staple trades have undergone developments far too specialised for the ordinary reader; to a vast number of secondary and miscellaneous industries and interests it is impossible to assign any adequate recognition; a bare enumeration, the recognition of an allusion, is all that can be spared for whole chapters of national progress during the last age. To such themes as railways, merchant shipping, the machinery of commerce, the new developments in social organisation, art, and literature, it seems almost useless to devote a few pages; while the subject of colonial history has only to be mentioned for the most casual reader to recognise the increased complication which the nineteenth century has brought to the national story.

Even since 1885, where the editors originally drew their line (evidently with some later regrets that this boundary could not be shifted down to the close of the Victorian reign), the local government of the United Kingdom has been profoundly modified; new methods have been introduced into industry; ship-building has taken a fresh start; legal reform has made notable progress; labour questions have been attended by many fresh developments; and an Imperial and Conservative movement (or reaction) of the most far-reaching character has influenced every side of national life and consciousness.

All the more heartily, then, we can congratulate the editors, contributors, and publishers of "Social England" on the measure of success they have realised, on the immense body of valuable information (sometimes a trifle unsifted, sometimes marred by error, but on the whole highly creditable) which is presented in these volumes, on the impartiality and truly scientific spirit which pervade almost the whole of the work, and by no means least, on the suggestive and representative illustrations by which the best of all possible commentaries is afforded to the text.

Mr. Fletcher's "Introductory History of England" down to the accession of the Tudors, where the author fixes, for his purpose, the close of the Middle Ages, is a brave and vigorous attempt to get away from dulness without losing touch of truth, to invest the story of mediaeval England with an interest which is lacking in such arid text-books as have become only too plentiful of late. As we might expect from

Mr. Fletcher, the book he has now given us is eminently characteristic, full of his own energetic, practical activity, his love of health, fresh air, and good exercise.

"When I began," he tells us, "I had foolish hopes that it might be a book some boys would take up for amusement, but I soon discovered that twenty-three years of teaching had made it impossible for me to do more than smear the powder with a thin layer of jam. We cannot render our dreams of the past (however convinced we may be of their truth) into an intelligible consecutive story."

Here, it seems to us, there is both truth and untruth. Mr. Fletcher's story is, in the main, highly intelligible and adequately consecutive (though one may make an exception of the Anglo-Saxon period, where the author seems at times almost to sink to Milton's notions of "kites and crows"); but how can any true student regard English history as if it were a nauseous drug, to be made palatable by some device? Should one not rather look at it as a storehouse from which a good judgment is needed to draw forth those treasures best suited to the audience one addresses—to the specialist this, to the general reader that, to the working man one thing, to the merchant, the professional man, or the politician another?

Yet though Mr. Fletcher anxiously disclaims the idea of pouring information into anyone, and still more anxiously repudiates the ambition of helping anybody to pass any examination, he has certainly given us here a sketch of living men by a living man, and everyone who is not a pedant, everyone who desires to remember that history is the life-record of humanity, will be grateful to him for this book. Peculiarly interesting is the picture attempted of an imaginary village in pre-Norman, Norman, and post-Norman times, with its three fields, for wheat, barley, and pasture, its arable strips, its green common or waste, its water-meadows, its pig-grazing woods, its no-man's land, and its bull-croft—as successful an attempt to realise the township-manor as any popular treatise has supplied in English of recent years; while a word must also be said in praise of the capital little chapter of geological history, illustrated by a serviceable map of N.W. Europe in the Old Stone age, with which Mr. Fletcher commences.

Mr. Chadwick's "Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions" supplies a useful corrective to the studied vagueness with which Mr. Fletcher treats our English history. Here a careful re-examination of the evidence bearing on some of the most interesting problems of early English history and sociology is attempted with distinct success. The writer's object has especially been to call attention to those branches of the subject which have hitherto suffered from comparative neglect. Thus he has dealt very lightly with Mercian and Northumbrian history because he had nothing of importance to add to previous work; but evidence relating to Kent, Sussex, Essex, and the Hwiccas has been reviewed and re-stated with great care, and with the belief that some fresh results have been attained. The most valuable portion of the

volume seems to be that dealing with the old English monetary system (accompanied by a useful excursus on Frankish coinage, pp. 1-75). And next to this the reader may be recommended to the chapters dealing with the history of the older counties (Kent, &c., pp. 269-307) and with the origin of the nobility (pp. 378-411). Great caution marks all Mr. Chadwick's work, and this quality is never more useful than in such a difficult period as the Anglo-Saxon. But his treatment of our early charters is also noticeable for its courage; when, even in obviously spurious documents, names and titles otherwise unknown are met with, the author, with a daring that will perhaps greatly shock some dogmatists, ventures to think that such names and titles are not necessarily products of imagination. To find one who will say this, and who will appeal moreover for a fairer hearing in the examination of tradition, popular as well as ecclesiastical, is certainly refreshing at the present moment.

STEREOCHEMISTRY.

Materialien der Stereochemie. (In Form von Jahresberichten.) Band i., 1894-1898; Band ii., 1899-1902. By C. A. Bischoff. Pp. cxxxvi+1977. (Brunswick: Vieweg and Son, 1904.) Price 90 marks.

In the course of his reply to a letter from the Chemical Society of London congratulating him on the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his doctorate, Prof. Emil Fischer writes as follows:—

"The time when the fundamental principles of our science were laid down, and when it was possible for the individual investigator to stamp the impress of his own mind upon it, is long since past, and in the gigantic structure, which it now represents, each fellow-worker can only finish some small fragment, or it may be, if he is fortunate, a pretty balcony or a striking turret."

The two ponderous tomes, in which Prof. Bischoff records the advances made in stereochemistry from 1894 to 1902, illustrate in a very striking manner this ever-increasing tendency to specialism in chemical research, which Fischer emphasises in the sentence just quoted.

Although Pasteur, in 1861, by his classical experiments with the isomeric tartaric acids, may be said to have laid the foundation of stereochemistry, the growth of this branch of chemical science was at first slow, since it was not till 1873 that Wislicenus pointed out as a consequence of his work with lactic acid that differences between compounds of identical structure must be ascribed to differences in the spacial arrangement of their atoms within the molecule. The publication in the following year by van't Hoff and Le Bel of their theory of the asymmetric carbon atom gave an immense impulse to experimental work, so that optically active compounds, which in those earlier days were numbered by tens, may now be counted by thousands.

The rapid development of stereochemistry is not, however, restricted to the field of optically active compounds. The researches of Victor Meyer and of Bischoff are fundamental in that branch where the